



NAACP

Maryland
STATE CONFERENCE

**CHAIR; MELONY GRIFFITH
FINANCE COMMITTEE
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB-259
FEBRUARY 16, 2023 **

**WILLIE FLOWERS; PRESIDENT
NAACP MARYLAND STATE CONFERENCE**

MY NAME IS WILLIE FLOWERS; PRESIDENT OF THE NAACP MARYLAND STATE CONFERENCE.

I AM WRITING IN SUPPORT OF SB-259 - BUSINESS REGULATION - FLAVORED TOBACCO PRODUCTS - PROHIBITION.

AS YOU KNOW, THE NAACP IS A CIVIL RIGHTS ORGANIZATION FOUNDED IN 1909 TO FIGHT FOR THE CIVIL RIGHTS OF AFRICAN AMERICANS. WE ARE HERE TODAY TO REMIND EVERYONE THAT FIGHTS CONTINUES AND THOSE CIVIL RIGHTS EXTENDS TO THE PROTECTION OF THE SAME AFRICAN AMERICANS AND THEIR FAMILIES IN REGARD TO TOBACCO, BIG TOBACCO AND THE CONTINUED ATTACK ON OUR COMMUNITIES WITH MARKETING SCHEMES THAT ADVANCE TOBACCO USE THROUGH PROMOTING FLAVORED TOBACCO TO YOUNG PEOPLE.

THIS MUST END.

7,500 MARYLAND RESIDENTS DIE EACH YEAR BECAUSE TOXIC TOBACCO PRODUCTS. THEY ARE FAMILY AND COMMUNITY LEADERS WHO COULD HAVE HELPED TO MAKE OUR STATE BETTER.

THE EXPLOITATION AND MANIPULATION BY BIG TOBACCO IS ONE OF THE REASONS BUT IT STARTS WITH TARGETING CHILDREN FOR FIRST USE AND THEN THE GOAL OF CONTINUED USE OF A PRODUCT THAT IS KNOWN TO CAUSE ADDICTION AND CANCER OF THE LUNGS, MOUTH AND THROAT. WHILE IT IS NOT THE CASE THAT

EVERYONE DIES OF CANCER DUE TO SMOKING IT IS THE CASE THAT ANYONE WHO IS AROUND A SMOKER FOR ANY POINT FEELS THE PHYSICAL IMPACT OF SMOKING. AGAIN, THE ADDS THAT ARE DESIGNED BY BIG TOBACCO RUN THE GAMBIT. THERE ARE OVER 15,000 PRODUCTS THAT FIT AND ARE DEVISED TO MIMIC NORMAL PRODUCTS THAT CHILDREN ENJOY: POP TARTZ, STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKE, COTTON CANDY AND OTHER TRICKY ENTICEMENTS.

WE DON'T NEED THIS IN MARYLAND.

THE NAACP WOULD LIKE TO BE A ORGANIZATION TO MAKE THE COMMUNITY AWARE OF THESE TACTICS TO THAT FAMILY CAN LIVE AND BE HEALTHY WITHOUT THE SICKNESS AND FUNERALS THAT ARE A PART OF A LIFETIME OF TOBACCO ADDICTION.

IT MUST BE SAID HERE THAT BLACK, BROWN AND POOR COMMUNITIES ARE THE TARGET FOR ALL OF THIS. WE SEE IT AS OUR JOB IN THE NAACP TO FIGHT FOR FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES.

RAISING AWARENESS AND REDUCING FIRST USE IS A GOOD START. SB-259 HELPS WITH THAT MOVE.

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